



THE AMERICAS: UNITED STATES

What are the most significant global issues facing us today?

While there are numerous issues impacting the world today, one issue that stands out is the challenge of tying in spa to the various definitions of health and wellness.

By definition, “health” means many different things to different communities or individuals as impacted by ease of access to supply, economy and even culture. To the Third World, health means better access to the basic necessities or existing solutions, whether it’s clean water, mosquito nets, medicine, or food. For the industrialized world, it’s largely a matter of choices: diet, exercise or stress-management. The challenge for the spa industry is to find ways to tie in spa to these diverse global health and wellness definitions which, on a broader spectrum, have become holistic, expansive and more embraced.

What do you see as the main innovations happening around the world, those which are game-changing and/or disruptive?

There are so many exciting things, from nanotechnology, the mapping of the human genome, innovations in energy production (fuel cells, high-efficiency solar), to penetration of digital currency. All of these are game-changing and disruptive to some extent but also exciting with the unlimited possibilities. In terms of innovation in the communications landscape, the growing market of social media has certainly changed the way we communicate today. Everything is now digital, impersonal and instantaneous. While this can certainly be game-changing, it can also be disruptive to a healthy lifestyle by the fact that we are always connected, rarely unplugged and hardly have time to reflect and invest in ourselves personally.

What do you see as the main innovations in the spa/wellness industry (existing and future)?

As the spa industry continues to grow, we will likely see ongoing trends as well as new concepts that are slowly gaining traction in the industry.

Customization of the spa experience: While we are already seeing spas offering customized products and services, from booking via mobile apps, personalizing smell, sound and touch to determining appropriate types or length of treatment (30-minute vs. 90-minute massages) to fit their clients’ unique needs, the concept of customizing the spa experience is likely here to stay, especially with the rise of the empowered health consumer who views health and wellness both as a proactive pursuit and an altruistic endeavor, consciously planning one’s daily diet or fitness regimen while sharing wellness experiences with one’s social media circles as an act of personal health advocacy.

Data-tracking and sharing: With the spa industry’s growing appetite and need for real science and data, we have come a long way in terms of tracking and sharing valuable research and data. From the Spa STAR Benchmarking tool to ISPA’s monthly Snapshot Survey, there are several other research tools that are currently reshaping how the industry analyzes, digests and shares business and scientific data.

What do you see as the greatest opportunities/challenges for the global spa and wellness industry?

Globally, the number-one reason people go to a spa is to learn how to manage and reduce their stress and the World Health Organization reports that by the year 2020, the top five diseases that will kill us all have an underlying factor of stress. The greatest opportunity is market share: there are still so many regions around the world that do not have spa as part of their everyday regimen. Even in the U.S. only one out of every four Americans have been to a spa. What a fabulous opportunity!

The challenge rests in ongoing education as well as in coming up with messaging that could truly reach consumers regarding the real value of spa to one's health.

Qualified Staff: The spa industry has a tremendous growth potential which can only be sustained if it is able to produce highly qualified staff. From a leadership perspective, the industry, being relatively young, is rather dependent on other outside industries in filling some of the key management roles. Unfortunately, the industry continues to be plagued by a lack of general understanding of what it means and takes to be a qualified spa staff-member. The spa community needs to take a concerted effort to define the skill sets needed, collaborate with credible universities and training institutions and more importantly, provide a clear direction in terms of curriculum, resources, tools and innovative approaches to education in order to enable these institution-partners to produce skilled graduates with the potential to be tomorrow's spa leaders.

What are some practical ways for businesses to create a climate for creativity and innovation?

Before we can truly innovate, there is a need to first create an environment of standards and consistency. Only then can we move on to look for ways to create a climate of creativity through collaboration, transparency, developing a culture of teamwork and a high level of trust, and finding meaningful ways to reward and recognize good ideas. It is also imperative that we look outside our industry for creative solutions and tap into the creativity of other individuals who have changed the world through their genius and creative contributions.

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